

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as shown in the complete claim set for this application. This listing of claims will replace all prior claims in the application:

1-21. (Cancelled)

22. (New) A method for operating a vehicle communication unit within a mobile vehicle communication system, the method comprising:

- attempting to operate in a primary communication mode using a vehicle communication unit on a first vehicle, wherein the communication unit is equipped to communicate in the primary communication mode;

- detecting a primary communication mode failure;

- initiating short range wireless communication between the first vehicle and a second vehicle responsive to the primary communication mode failure, wherein the second vehicle has a vehicle communication unit enabled to communicate in the primary communication mode;

- transmitting data between the first vehicle and the second vehicle via the short range wireless communication; and

- communicating the data with a service provider via a wireless carrier system to request assistance for the first vehicle using the vehicle communication unit on the second vehicle.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein detecting the primary communication mode failure comprises:

- detecting if the vehicle communication unit cannot initiate contact with a wireless carrier system; and

- detecting if the vehicle communication unit cannot maintain communication with the wireless carrier system.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein detecting the primary communication

mode failure comprises determining that a GPS unit within the vehicle communication unit is unable to receive a GPS satellite broadcast from a GPS satellite broadcast system.

25. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the primary communication mode is a cellular wireless connection.

26. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the secondary communication mode is a wireless connection using a communication protocol selected from the group consisting of: IEEE 802.11 series standard, Dedicated Short Range Communication standard, and Bluetooth.

27. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the transmitting step further comprises communicating data from the first vehicle to the second vehicle via the secondary communication mode.

28. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the transmitting step further comprises communicating data from the second vehicle to the first vehicle via the secondary communication mode.

29. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the communicating step further comprises sending the transmitted data from the second vehicle to the wireless carrier system via the primary communication mode.

30. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein the communicating step further comprises sending data from the wireless carrier system to the second vehicle via the primary communication mode.

31. (New) A method for operating a vehicle communication unit within a mobile vehicle communication system, the method comprising:

attempting to operate a first vehicle communication unit on a first vehicle in a primary communication mode;

detecting a primary communication mode failure due to degraded equipment on the first vehicle;

initiating a second communication mode using a local wireless link between the first vehicle and a second vehicle responsive to the primary communication mode failure, wherein the second vehicle has a second vehicle communication unit configured to communicate using the primary communication mode;

sending a request for assistance for the first vehicle to a service provider via a wireless communication system using the second vehicle communication unit; and

communicating data to complete the request for assistance between the first vehicle and the second vehicle using the second communication mode.

32. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein detecting the primary communication mode failure comprises:

detecting if the first vehicle communication unit cannot initiate contact with a wireless carrier system; and

detecting if the first vehicle communication unit cannot maintain communication with the wireless carrier system.

33. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein detecting the primary communication mode failure further comprises determining that a GPS unit within the first vehicle is unable to receive a GPS satellite broadcast from a GPS satellite broadcast system.

34. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the primary communication mode is a cellular wireless connection.

35. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the secondary communication mode is a wireless connection using a communication protocol selected from the group consisting of: IEEE 802.11 series standard, Dedicated Short Range Communication standard, and Bluetooth.

36. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the sending step further comprises sending a request from the second vehicle to a wireless carrier system via the primary communication mode.

37. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the sending step further comprises receiving a response to the request at the second vehicle via the primary communication mode.

38. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the communicating step further comprises sending data from the first vehicle to the second vehicle via the secondary communication mode.

39. (New) The method of claim 31, wherein the communicating step further comprises sending data to the first vehicle via the secondary communication mode from the second vehicle, wherein the second vehicle received the data from a wireless communication system in response to the request for assistance.